

Northern Uplands



Forested hiking trails, superb wine regions, traditional folk culture and castle ruins high in the hills beckon you to the Uplands. OK, so the highest peak here – Kékes in the Mátra Hills – is just more than a whopping 1000m. In a country as flat as a *palacsinta* (pancake), these foothills of the Carpathians soar above most of Hungary. Explore Bükk National Park on foot, with its minimal human habitation (but readily available accommodation). Or go caving in the largest stalactite system in Europe, the 25km-long Baradla-Domica caves in Aggtelek. After a few exertion-filled days, why not sip the eminently drinkable Bull's Blood red wine in the beautifully baroque town of Eger, or the sweet ambrosia-like white Aszú near the Tisza River in Tokaj.

But the five ranges of the Uplands – Cserhát, Mátra, Bükk, Aggtelek and Zemplén – are not only about nature and her products. This is a land where the folkways of the Palóc and Mátyó people hold strong in traditional villages like Hollókő and Mezőkövesd. As reminders of far too many battles won and lost, ageing castles and evocative ruins punctuate the landscape above numerous towns. History buffs will want to read up on the anti-Habsburg national uprising of the 18th century; many related events took place in this region. Outdoor recreation, culture, history – must be time to head for the hills.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Savouring **Eger** (p330), the unequalled jewel of the Uplands – a spa town of legendary wine, baroque architecture and easygoing temperament
- Taking a narrow-gauge forest railway trip up the mountain to the lakeside resort town of **Lillafüred** (p343)
- Attending a medieval festival at **Boldogkő Castle** (p347) ruins, perched high on a craggy cliff
- Hiking through the lush green forests of the Bükk Hills after visiting the famous white stallions in **Szilvásvárad** (p338)
- Staying overnight and listening to the silence in **Hollókő** (p319), a tiny village where folk art and tradition live on



